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## PREVENTION OF CRIME

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BY ADOLPH O. EBERHART,  
Governor of Minnesota.

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It has been stated by an eminent authority on penology that the aim and nature of all prison discipline is, first, the protection of society and, second, the reformation of the offender. While this is true as to prison discipline, it represents only one obligation of the state to society. It is recognized to-day by all authorities on penology that one of the most important duties of the state to society is that of removing the causes which contribute to the commission of crime. Minnesota has taken a leading part in the care and treatment of the unfortunates in penal and charitable institutions. We are now building one of the most sanitary and modern prisons in the world and the management of that institution is admittedly one of the best in the country. In our prison and reformatory we have made provision for the employment and compensation of the prisoners and in many cases where families are found dependent upon prisoners, a certain portion of the prison's earnings is paid directly to the family. No state in the Union profits more by the labor of its prisoners, and it can, therefore, afford to be liberal in the payment of compensation, so as to provide for dependent mothers and children, who, through imprisonment of the husband, have been bereft of family support.

The one great principle involved in the prevention of crime is the maintenance of the home through which the children can be provided for, kept in school and given suitable recreation and employment. When the family is broken up and the children permitted to drift upon the streets without supervision, recreation or employment, it is only a question of time when some of them will finally stray away, drift into error and crime and land in our penal institutions. If there is anything that reflects discredit upon America it is the fact that our homes are so easily broken up, marriage vows so readily dissolved and the children permitted to pursue their own course without supervision or restriction. Any legislation, therefore, which will tend to keep the home intact and bind its members more closely

together, keep children under proper supervision and guidance, promote health, and assist in securing wholesome recreation and employment, will have a direct bearing upon the lessening of distress, poverty and crime. Where the parents are found unable to take care of the children, they should be given suitable assistance, for it costs the state only about one-half as much to assist a worthy mother in the care of her children as to provide for them in a state institution. Every effort, therefore, on the part of the state to lessen and prevent crime must be centered about the home.

Perhaps there is no reform more urgent to-day than the penal or workhouse farm. In examining the records of our workhouses, I have found cases where men have been committed more than thirty times. Whenever an offender does not reform after working out two or three sentences in the workhouse, he should be sent to the reformatory or prison. All workhouses should be provided with a large farm or such other means of employment for the inmates as will afford the least competition with free labor. The employment of short term convicts upon farms has been proven an unqualified success. In the case of a large city the produce could be either sold on the market or to other city or state institutions. Every convict should be permitted to earn fair wages, a portion of which should go to the maintenance of the institution and the remainder directly to the family or other dependents. Often in our large cities, when the father has been sent to the workhouse, the family is without support and the mother is compelled to go out on the street that she may secure sufficient work to keep her children from starvation. No one is left to take charge of the children. They drift away from home, fall into bad company, commit some crime and finally become charges of the state. The neglect of the city or the state to provide compensation for its prisoners and to turn over a sufficient amount of that compensation for the support of the family surely is a policy best designated as "penny wise and pound foolish."

Because of this negligence on the part of the state many efforts have been made by public and individual charity to support the mother and children and to keep the home intact. Some cities and states have provided a system of pensions for dependent mothers. This system is undoubtedly valuable when properly administered in providing temporary relief, but it does not reach the root of the evil. The arguments in favor of such a public charity are numerous. It

is claimed that the private charity organizations are too numerous and consequently more expensive in administration; that the pension system is more certain and permanent in providing regular income to the mother which will better secure the education and training of her children; that the state has more power in the regulation of health and sanitation, and that under its extensive system of schools and institutions, it can better assist the mother in directing and training her children; that the mother is entitled to secure this assistance from the state as a matter of right, and that it is the duty of the state to give it to her; that private charity is insufficient and that the state is better able to cope with it. On the other hand, it is argued that this pension system opens the public treasury to those who believe it inexhaustible and who otherwise would not depend upon it; that it will have a tendency to stop individual giving and the establishment of individual charities; that there is too much publicity connected with public charity, and that it necessarily parades the unfortunate before the people; that it is difficult to enact a law which will be sufficiently elastic to apply justly in every case; that the state has no agency which can properly administer this charity, except where specially created for that purpose, in which event the method of selecting officers is too cumbersome and too dependent upon change of political administration.

The obligation resting upon the state cannot be satisfied by the payment of these pensions. Where the husband has deserted the family, the strong arm of the law should reach him and compel him to contribute to its support, and where the husband has been committed to a penal institution, he should be employed and a sufficient portion of his compensation be allowed the family for support. It is of greater importance that the slums of the city should be removed; that parks and playgrounds for the children should be provided so that the children of the large cities may have an opportunity to play and develop under more wholesome conditions than they are afforded to-day. When the state has removed the opportunities for, and the temptations which lead to, the commission of error and crime, when the environments of the city are made more wholesome and attractive, the criminal records of the state will not be burdened with the sad story of so many boys and girls who have gone wrong. In ancient times a very unique test of sanity was employed. The person to be adjudged was requested to dip out water with a dipper from a tub

under an open faucet. If he kept on dipping he was committed, but if he turned off the faucet, he was adjudged sane. We shall always, perhaps, be compelled to dip out water by increasing the capacity of our penal and charitable institutions, but I am in favor of turning off the faucet by removing the causes which to-day are responsible for most of our poverty, disease and crime.